

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NEA-07 SSO-00 EURE-00 NSC-05

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FM AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4652

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 COPENHAGEN 3705

LIMDIS

USOECD ALSO FOR EMBASSY

USEEC

E.O.: 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, SY, US, DA

SUBJ: DANISH FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT TO SYRIA: ALL MIDEAST

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EGGS IN THE US BASKET

REF : DAMASCUS 3777 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY. THE MFA'S POLITICAL DIRECTOR SUGGESTED THAT SECRETARY VANCE MAY BE INTERESTED IN THIS READOUT OF DANISH FOREIGN MINISTER K. B. ANDERSEN'S RECENT VISIT TO SYRIA SINCE ANDERSEN

AND THE SECRETARY MAY HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE REMARKS AT THE OECD MINISTERIAL JUNE 23-24. THE DANES BELIEVE THAT ASAD HAS TOTALLY COMMITTED HIMSELF TO US SUCCESS IN FINDING A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IN THE MIDEAST. ANDERSEN'S SYRIAN VISIT MAY BE THE CULMINATION OF DENMARK'S "UNTILTING" PROCESS FROM AN EARLIER PRO-ISRAELI POSTURE. ASAD'S PRESENTATION FAVORABLY IMPRESSED THE DANES WHOSE COMMON SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC TIES WITH ISRAEL HAVE IN ANY CASE BEEN WEAKENED BY THE RECENT ISRAELI ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. MFA POLITICAL DIRECTOR OLE BIERRING CALLED IN THE AMBASSADOR ON JUNE 20 TO BRIEF HIM ON FOREIGN MINISTER K. B. ANDERSEN'S JUNE 12-15 VISIT TO SYRIA. BECAUSE OF PRESIDENT ASAD'S EMPHASIS ON HIS FAITH IN THE US ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AMBASSADOR BIERRING SUGGESTED THAT HIS BRIEFING BE CALLED TO THE SECRETARY'S ATTENTION BEFORE THE JUNE 23-24 OECD MINISTERIAL MEETING IN PARIS. BIERRING REMARKED THAT THERE MAY BE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ANDERSEN AND THE SECRETARY TO EXCHANGE REMARKS AT THAT TIME.

2. BIERRING, WHO ACCOMPANIED ANDERSEN, SAID THAT THE VISITORS HAD TWO ROUNDS OF TALKS WITH SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM AS WELL AS AN HOUR WITH PRESIDENT ASAD. ASAD CREATED A VERY POSITIVE IMPRESSION ON THE DANES. BIERRING DESCRIBED HIM AS "MODERATE, PRECISE AND A STATESMAN" WITH A REAL DESIRE TO FIND A PEACEFUL SOLUTION IN THE MIDEAST. BIERRING SAID THAT IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT ASAD HAS, IN A VERY REAL SENSE, PUT HIS "POLITICAL DESTINY" IN CONFIDENTIAL

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US HANDS. ASAD REPEATED TO THE DANES ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS HIS HIGH REGARD FOR PRESIDENT CARTER.

3. ASAD TOLD THE DANES THAT IF PRESIDENT CARTER IS REALLY DEDICATED TO A SOLUTION OF THE MIDDLE-EAST PROBLEM, HE WILL PREVAIL OVER THE DOMESTIC US "JEWISH LOBBY," AND BY DOING SO, BE ABLE TO MOVE THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT ITSELF. ASAD DOES NOT, ON THE OTHER HAND, UNDERESTIMATE THE DIFFICULTY OF DEALING WITH THE ISRAELIS IN ORDER TO GET THEM TO MAKE THE CONCESSIONS NEEDED TO LEAD TO A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT.

4. ASAD STRESSED ARABIC INSISTENCE THAT THE FIRST STEP TOWARD A SOLUTION MUST BE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL TO THE 1967 BORDERS. AFTER SUCH A WITHDRAWAL, THE QUESTION OF THE PALESTINIANS WILL BE ADDRESSED. ASAD DISMISSED AS UNTENABLE ARGUMENTS BY ISRAEL THAT THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES ARE NECESSARY FOR THE COUNTRY'S SECURITY. THIS SECURITY COULD BE MAINTAINED BY UN FORCES WHICH, HOWEVER, MUST BE STATIONED IN EQUAL DEPTH ON BOTH THE ISRAELI AND ARABIC SIDES OF THE BORDERS. ASAD WENT ON TO SAY THAT ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL IS THE KEY FIRST STEP; IN ITSELF IT WOULD NOT NECESSARILY LEAD TO A "NORMALIZATION" OF RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB STATES.

5. IN DISCUSSING THE "LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIANS," ASAD AVOIDED SPECIFYING WHAT SUCH RIGHTS SHOULD BE AND HOW THEY SHOULD BE GRANTED. ASAD INSISTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE PALESTINIANS MUST PARTICIPATE IN NEW GENEVA TALKS WHICH SHOULD BE CONVENED "AS SOON AS POSSIBLE". THE FACT THAT THE ISRAELIS DON'T RECOGNIZE THE PALESTINIANS CANNOT BE CONTROLLING SINCE "ALL THE ARABS" DON'T RECOGNIZE ISRAEL EITHER. THE PALESTINIANS, SAID ASAD, COULD WELL BE FIT IN AS PART OF "ANOTHER COUNTRY'S" DELEGATION BUT THEY MUST BE INVITED IN THEIR OWN RIGHT.

6. THE PRECISE KIND OF PALESTINIAN "HOME LAND" WAS LEFT OPEN BY THE SYRIANS: THAT IS, WHETHER IT SHOULD BE INDEPENDENT OR PERHAPS PART OF A "GREATER SYRIA." BIERRING COMMENTED THAT IT WAS OB-
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VIOUS THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE MANY PROBLEMS WITH THE PALESTINIANS AND WANTED TO AVOID THEIR BEING THE "DOMINATING FACTOR" IN A FUTURE MIDEAST MOSAIC.

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7. ANDERSEN ASKED ASAD WHETHER THE SOVIETS WOULD CAUSE PROBLEMS. THE SYRIANS DID NOT ANSWER DIRECTLY BUT REPLIED THAT SOVIET PROFESSIONS OF A WISH FOR A "PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT" CONFIDENTIAL

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SHOULD BE TAKEN AT FACE VALUE.

8. ASAD UNDERLINED SYRIAN BELIEF THAT THE EC NINE HAVE NOT DONE ENOUGH THEMSELVES IN WORKING FOR A RESOLUTION OF MIDEAST PROBLEMS. WHEN ANDERSEN ASKED WHAT THE SYRIANS WANTED, HOWEVER, FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM WAS NOT SPECIFIC BEYOND THE REQUEST THAT "ANOTHER STATEMENT" WOULD BE MADE BY THE NINE.

9. THE SYRIANS, SAID BIERRING, MADE THEIR "STANDARD EXPLANATION" ON THE FUTURE OF THEIR ROLE IN LEBANON. THE LEBANESE "PROBLEM", SAID ASAD, WAS CREATED ONLY BECAUSE THE PALESTINIANS WERE THROWN OUT OF ISRAEL. SYRIAN FORCES ARE READY TO PULL OUT OF LEBANON AS SOON AS THE LEBANESE HAVE "PUT THINGS IN ORDER." BIERRING OBSERVED THAT IT APPEARED TO THE DANES THAT THE LEBANESE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE LITTLE IN THE WAY OF RECONCILING THE VARIOUS FACTORS.

10. IN CONCLUDING HIS PRESENTATION, BIERRING SAID THAT IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT SYRIA WAS IN DIFFICULT ECONOMIC STRAITS, LARGELY CREATED BY THE PERCEIVED NEED TO SPEND 70 PERCENT OF ITS BUDGET ON DEFENSE. THE SYRIANS TOLD THE DANES THAT BUDGET SUPPORT FROM OTHER ARAB STATES HAD BEEN STOPPED BUT THE QUESTION OF WHY WAS NOT PURSUED. THE SYRIANS DID VOICE THE HOPE THAT SUCH ASSISTANCE WOULD BE SOON RESUMED.

11. THE DANES AGREED WITH THE SYRIAN MINISTER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO NEGOTIATE AN ECONOMIC, TECHNICAL AND CULTURAL AGREEMENT. IN SPITE OF SYRIA'S ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, BIERRING OBSERVED THAT ITS PER CAPITA INCOME IS STILL HIGHER THAN THE DANISH THRESHOLD FOR GRANT AID. THE TWO AREAS OF LOAN ASSISTANCE THAT

WERE DISCUSSED BETWEEN THE DANES AND SYRIANS WERE THE DEVELOPMENT
OF AND IRRIGATION FOR A 600,000 HECTARE AGRICULTURAL AREA NEAR
THE EUPHRATES DAM AND THE PROMOTION OF THE TOURIST POTENTIAL
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ALONG THE MEDITERANEAN COAST.

12. IN BIERRING'S OPINION, ASAD WOULD BE IN SERIOUS DOMESTIC DIFFICULTY IF THE US DOESN'T "PRODUCE" IN THE MIDDLE-EAST. BIERRING SAID THAT FROM HIS VIEWPOINT, SUCH A FAILURE WOULD LEAD TO THE REPLACEMENT OF BOTH ASAD AND SADAT.

13. BIERRING CONCURRED IN THE AMBASSADOR'S OBSERVATION THAT OVER THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS THE DANES HAVE BEEN "UNTILTED" FROM THEIR EARLIER ISRAELI BIAS TO A POSITION OF NEUTRAL EVENHANDEDNESS. BIERRING OBSERVED THAT THE ISRAELIS HAVE LONG BEEN MASTERS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND HAVE CAPITALIZED ON THEIR OBVIOUS AFFINITY WITH THE WEST IN ORDER TO PRESENT THEIR POINT OF VIEW CONVINCINGLY. THE ARABS, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAVE BEEN INEPT AND EVEN FRIGHTENINGLY ALIEN TO WESTERN CULTURAL BIASES. ASAD'S PRESENTATION TO THE VISITING DANES WAS ONE OF THE RARE "REASONABLE" STATEMENTS OF THE ARAB POSITION THAT THE DANES HAVE HEARD. (COMMENT. IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT THE DANES HAVE BEEN EXPANDING THEIR DIPLOMATIC AND COMMERCIAL CONTACTS WITH THE ARABS.) FINALLY, BIERRING SAID THAT SPEAKING ONLY VERY PERSONALLY, HE BELIEVED THAT THE CEMENT BETWEEN DENMARK AND ISRAEL REPRESENTED BY SHARED SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS WILL INEVITABLY BE WEAKENED AS THE RESULT OF THE LAST ISRAELI ELECTIONS.
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